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The Way to make a NATION Happy.

Consider'd in a

S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

St. *PAUL's*,

Before the Right Honourable the

LORD MAYOR,

Court of ALDERMEN,

AND

Citizens of L O N D O N.

Upon *Wednesday*, the 15th of *March*, 1711.

Being the Day Appointed by Her Majesty's
Royal PROCLAMATION for a Day of
PUBLICK FASTING and Humiliation.

By the Reverend Mr. *COLLINS*, M. A.
Vicar of *Mepham* in *Kent*, and Chaplain to Her
Majesty's Royal Navy in Ordinary at *Chatham*.

L O N D O N:

Printed, and are to be Sold by *John Morphew*, near
Stationers-Hall. 1710.

Garrard Mayor.

Jovis xvi. Die Martii, 1709. Annoq;
R. Reginae Annæ Magnæ Britanniae,
&c. Nono.

THIS Court doth desire Mr. Collins to Print
his Sermon Preach'd before the Lord Mayor,
Aldermen and Citizens of this City, at the Cathedral
Church of St. Paul, Yesterday, being the Day ap-
pointed by Her Majesty's Royal Proclamation for a
Day of Publick Fasting and Humiliation.



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To the Right Honourable

The Earl of Dorset and Middlesex.

My LORD,

I Have observ'd in several of our Modern Sermons a Stile below the Dignity of the Gospel, and no way becoming the Preachers of his Doctrine whose Kingdom is not of this World: When such Discourses meet with that Reception they deserve, some are ready to complain of the Hardships upon the Pulpit, from those Censures which our unwary Brethren too justly draw upon themselves; but, never were there more pressing Commands laid upon, more Encouragements given to the Clergy to recommend Piety and Virtue, and to reprove Wickedness and Vice, then in the Reign of our present Pious and truly Religious Queen. This is what I have aim'd at in my following Discourse, which I should not presume to Dedicate to your Lordship, were I not verily perswaded that it must needs do more Good in the World, when it has the Honour to appear with so great an Advantage, and I hope your Lordship will pardon a Liberty I should not dare to take, in any other Cause than this of Religion. May your Lordship always be the Beloved of Heaven, as you are now the Darling of your Country, the Delight of so many upon Earth, among all which there is not one more intirely Devoted to your Service, than,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most Faithful,

And most Obedient Humble Servant,

R. COLLINS.

The Way to make a NATION Happy.

JER. vii. 23. The latter part of the Verse.

Obey my Voice, and I will be your God; and ye shall be my People: And walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you that it may be well with you.

THIS Chapter leads us to contemplate, God's great Goodness to the *Jews*; and their vile Ingratitude towards him, his Goodness, in that he had given them Understanding to discern between Good and Evil; and Laws, every way calculated to make them *Wise and Happy*: And moreover, had taken such Methods to convey his Precepts, by *Moses, Aaron*, and the Prophets; and confirm'd them with Miracles, in such a Manner, that there might be no Room left for them to doubt, but that it was the whole Mind, and Will of God, which was declar'd to them; such advantages had the *Mosaick Dispensation*, beyond the Patriarchal Oeconomy, and so much were the *Jews* especially regarded in that Dispensation; as justly gave them the distinguishing Appellations of God's own; his Peculiar, his Chosen People, yet such was their Perverseness, such their Ingratitude, that they shut as it were their Ears against his Voice, would hear none of his Counsels, nor yet the Dictates of their own Consciences, a strange evil Spirit of Unbelief seems to have possessed them from the beginning: which had charm'd them to Slavery, under the Pretence of Liberty. Or else, how was it possible, that after so great Demonstrations, of God's Wisdom and Power, they should be so little affected by them; as to run some into Idolatry, and gross Superstition, others into numerous, and unreasonable Divisions. Some to one Extream, some to another, by which means it could not be, but that most of them must forsake the right way, and either worship false Gods, or else the true God, in such a manner as was highly displeasing to him, This Confusion upon their Minds, in Matters of Religion, introduced a General Corruption of Manners, for unsettled Principles, as naturally end in a dissolute Life, as a wicked Life tends to make Men very scrupulous, sceptical, and quarrellsome with their Religion. I observe therefore that a Man is as much obliged rightly to inform his Conscience, as he is bound to act according to his Conscience; for want of this did those miserable People, blindly, and according to the constant Property of a Zeal without Knowledge, very furiously pursue the Chimera's of a whimsical Brain for right Reason; the Dictates of corrupt Passion, for Piety and Virtue, and in a word, forsaking the Commandments of God, and perverting the Order of things, were grown so preposterously wicked, as to call Good Evil and Evil Good. Yet for all this, did the Goodness of God struggle with his Justice, and as a tender Father pitieth his own Rebellious Children,

The Way to make a Nation Happy.

5

dren, He spar'd, He wept over them, and all the time they were flying away from him, Woo'd. and intreated them to return: When none of these gentle Methods would do, He Corrected; He Punished; yet so, as in the midst of Judgment, always to remember Mercy; and join'd to every deliberate Stroke of his saving Rod; such loud, such earnest Calls, as might affect their Minds, as well as Bodies; and so prevent their feeling any more. *Obey my Voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my People: And walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.* Not that He, the great God of Heaven and Earth, Blessed for ever, who was infinitely happy from all Eternity, and who had Myriads of bright Angels, most glorious Spirits, encompassing his Throne, and attending perpetually to obey his Commands; and could, by a Word of his Mouth, create as many more as he pleas'd; could be Benefited, by the mean and inconsiderable Service, of his inferiour Creatures, does he importune them to serve him; No! but because that is the best, the only way of serving themselves. *And I will be your God, and ye shall be my People.* These Words of Sweetness and Endearment, proclaim the highest Honour, and surest Protection and Defence, for according to that just Observation of the Royal Psalmist, *Happy, exceeding happy! are the People who are in such a Case, Blessed, yea and for ever Blessed! are the People who have the Lord of heaven and Earth for their God. And walk ye in all my Commandments: that is, Compound not with one Virtue, for the want of another, but practice an universal Obedience: And as none of my Commands are grievous, so do not ye grieve my Spirit by slighting the least of them: That it may be well with you, forasmuch as according to the Eternal Decree of Heaven, it could not be well with the Wicked.* And this was not spoken to the Israelites, as particular Persons, but as incorporated into a Nation. I shall therefore endeavour to shew,

First, *That the only way for any Nation to be Prosperous and Happy, is to obey God, and keep all his Commandments; that this has been prov'd by the Experience of all Ages, since the Creation of the World; and that Remarkably in every Period of the Mosaic Dispensation; that the Jewish Nation particularly did either flourish or decline in Reputation and Interest as they observ'd or disregarded this Rule.*

Secondly, *That since the Revelation of the Gospel by the Son of God, we in these last Ages of the World, have more clear Discoveries made to us, than the Jews had, and consequently are obliged to greater Degrees of Holiness than they were.*

Thirdly, *That of all Nations under Heaven, We of this Island, seem to have been God's peculiar Care, and have seen and felt the most amazing Instances of his Love and Goodness.* And then,

Fourthly, *'Twill be very proper to Inquire, what suitable Returns we have made, in order to discover what Duty remains to be perform'd by us, and to excite our Care and Diligence, in the Performance of it; this I take to be the true Design of our Solemn Assembling here at this time.* And,

First, *The only way for any Nation to be Prosperous and Happy, is to obey God, and keep all his Commandments.* And the Truth of this Observation will appear, whether we consider the Nature of Man; or the

Nature of Virtue and Vice; or the Wisdom and Providence of God. As to the Nature of Man, we need go no farther than ourselves to find out its Depravity: The dire effect of that ungrateful Disobedience, which the Sons of Adam are too ready to discover, even under the Covenant of Grace in us, that is, in our Flesh dwelleth no good thing, but the Law in our Members, is continually Warring against the Law of our Minds; and will too often vanquish and subdue it. *So that the Good which we would, that we do not; but the Evil which we would not, that do we.*

Nor, does this Depravity of Man's Nature, at all lessen the Goodness of the Creator; out of whose gracious Hand, he came unstain'd, pure, and perfect; and might have continu'd so, if he had pleas'd, but rather heightens the Folly and Guilt, of such a Rebellious Creature, whom all the Bounty of Heaven, could not oblige to keep but one single Command, Let us therefore instead of murmuring against Providence, always Wise, and Just and Good, fix the Wretchedness of our Nature, upon its proper Cause, and lay the blame wholly upon ourselves; and then by contemplating, from what a Pitch of Glory and Happiness, the Apostate Angels fell, and into what a Gulph of Horror and Misery, 'twill be easie to account for such a Charge in Adam's Nature, upon his Fall from God, as is as much distant from, and below, what it was at first, as Heaven is from Hell. He who wanted for nothing before, became sensible that he wanted every thing now; a serf, a forsaken, a contemptible Rebel: Naked, yet destitute of Cloaths to cover him, the delightful Fruits of Paradise, must be left for Briars and Thorns; the Emblems of those keen Appetites, and sharp Passions, which prick'd, and fretted, and gall'd, and tormented, his guilty Breast within, his Reason he debas'd, and bend down, under the heavy load of Sin, and thus the first Spring of Nature being polluted, must necessarily convey the same, thro' all the Channels into which it flow'd, nor yet, does this Depravity of Nature, destroy the Freedom of the Will; which, tho' it be hard and difficult, 'tis not impossible to preserve: Man may make himself in some Measure, a necessary Agent, but he is not Born so. An earnest, a sincere Endeavour, join'd with hearty Prayer for Grace, a close Attention of the Mind to Truth, a looking well, and carefully into ourselves, viewing frequently the first Springs and Operations of our Minds, a due Regard to the Temper and Constitution of our Bodies, a speedy Application of Remedies, will do the Work: But alas! how few are there of all the Sons of Adam, who will be at this Pains, and consequently are free: How do their Imperious Lusts and Passions Captivate, and Enslave, Tyrannize, and Insult over them. Making them like the Centurion's Servants, Go, when they bid them go, Come, when they bid them come, do whatever they command them. And, if it be so hard, and difficult, to restrain and keep Mankind within any tolerable bounds, even when they have all the Helps and Advantages imaginable; alas! what would become of the World, were there no Law to govern it? What a dismal Place would it be, if Chance only reign'd? and God's Being, and Government, as some would have them, were banish'd out of the World? Or if, as others, no less Prophane-ly tell us; He had left the Affairs of it to our Management and Disposal, the wisest of all the Sons of Men, could not with his greatest Skill and

The Way to make a Nation Happy.

7

and Conduct, perform such a Task for one Hour; were *Solomon's* Self alive to attempt it, and God should Condescend by such an Experiment, to check the Aspiring Pride of poor Mortals, to suspend his Care for a Time, even he, like a Blind Man that had lost his Guide, would soon wander into unknown Labyrinths, fall into a Pit, and perish: And to what would the Kingdoms of the Earth be like? Or with what Comparison shall we compare them? To a Conservatory of all sorts of Wild Beasts, turn'd into a Wilderness, where each having broke his Chain, and got loose from his Keeper, Ranges, Roars, Bites, and Devours, all that are not swifter, or stronger than he. Therefore, *Obeys my Voice*, says God, *let me be your Governor, who made you*; and for that Reason, have both a Right to Govern, and a Power to Preserve you: I have, by my own infinite Wisdom, consider'd your Case; and foreseeing the Consequences of all Actions, and the Events of all Things, thro' all Ages of the World, have suited my Commands, according to every Circumstance and Condition of Human Life, and made them necessarily Conducive to Happiness, both here and hereafter. For, do but consider the Nature of virtue and Vice, how directly they oppose each other, advancing the Interest of two contrary Masters, and then, as Wisdom directs, look to the End. You will see that as different as the Way, the Ways of Virtue are plain, open, and straight before us, safe and delightful; and they lead to everlasting Glory and Bliss: The ways of Sin, are crooked, Intricate, and amazing, Vexatious to ourselves and others. If a Man looks back, he can see nothing but Confusion and Shame; if forwards, Sorrow and Misery: *For the End is Death Eternal*. But it lies upon me at present, to shew the Advantage of keeping God's Commands, not so much as they respect particular Persons, and the other World, as they tend to support Nations and States in this World, and because Religion lays the surest Tye upon Men's Consciences, and a just Apprehension, and Awe, and Reverential Fear of God, founded upon true Notions of his Nature, and Essence, and Attributes; are the strongest Bands of Civil Society and Government: The Duties of the First Table, were design'd, to unite the Affections, and Interests, and Aims, of all Men, into the only proper Object, the God of all the World; directing afterwards in what manner he is to be serv'd, and to promote this End the more effectually, setting apart a Publick Day for the Celebration of his Worship: That by this Memorial, of the wonderful Deliverances, God had wrought for, and the many Blessings, he had bestow'd upon one Nation; others might be encouraged, to depend upon his Scepter, and so procure, as great Deliverances, and Blessings for themselves: But as the Duties of the Second Table, regard Man alone, so they seem to suggest more abundant Kindness, than Man is able to return; forasmuch as his Welfare is provided for, in more Commands than his Lord and Masters Honour. For can any Peace be preserv'd in that State? or any Nation flourish? where Children obey not their Parents, nor Parents, carefully, virtuously, and religiously, breed up their Children: Or where Subjects are disobedient to the just Commands of those that are set in Authority over them: and refuse to live quietly under their Government, and to contribute, according to their Capacity, to the Defence and Support of it. If Scholars think

themselves too wise to submit to their Governors; Christians despise their Spiritual Pastors and Teachers, and these likewise overlook their Duty to those committed to their Care; Can it be well with such a People? If Men were permitted to Marther one another, upon every Heat or Passion, and to break the very Bands of Civil Society, which are the Protection and Security of its Members, could a Nation flourish? And do not Variance, Hatred, Emulation, Envy, Revenge, Evil Speaking, weaken, divide, and ruine all? What is more destructive of Peace and Order, than the Breach of the Seventh Commandment? A prostituting the most Solemn Vow that can be made betwixt Man and Man: to separate the nearest Relations, lay the Ground of infinite Quarrels, and Hatred, and Divisions in Families, and oftentimes occasioning Murders, Seditions, and Contentions in the Civil State? What is more injurious to the Publick, than to Emasculate Mens Minds, Enfeeble their Bodies, and to propagate Sickness and Infirmities to their Posterity? In a Word, if Cheating and Oppression, Fraud and Falshood and Perfidiousness, are injurious to the Common-wealth; (and if they are not so, I know not what is) If it does receive Damage, by Calumpnies, Tale-bearing, Rash Speaking, and false Witnessing, by Coveting our Neighbours Goods, and endeavouring to deprive him of his Right; then I think, it does plainly appear, from the Nature of Virtue and Vice, as well as from the Nature of Man, that no Nation can be Prosperous and Happy, without keeping God's Commandments. A private Person may, and often does flourish in his Sin, and this is the Cause, that many Wicked Men, are so puffed up with Pride, and holden in Iniquity: Yet how often, are they seen to consume, perish, and come to a fearful End: Insomuch that there are no Remains left, of all the Pomp and Grandure, they so vainly gloried in. *I went by, and lo, they were gone, I sought them, but their place could no where be found.*

But if this be not always the Case, yet another State, will easily account for God's Forbearance. But his Wisdom and Providence are concern'd, to Reward and Punish Nations, in this World; because, as Nations, there is no after Reckonings for them. And also to preserve the Authority of his Laws, and secure the Obedience of his Subjects. Of the Patriarchal Age, there is little Recorded, for which Reason it is call'd by the *Jews*, the Days of *Emptiness*; yet this we are told for a Warning: *that their Wickedness brought an Universal Deluge, which swept them all away, except Eight Persons only, whose Righteousness preserved them.* But I am sure the *Mosaic Dispensation*, is full of Instances, of the Prosperity, or Adversity of Nations, as they obey'd, or transgress'd the Law of God. What Plagues did He bring upon the *Egyptians*? He turn'd their Waters into Blood, so that they might not drink of the River: When this had no Effect, he sent, *Frogs*: then *Lice and Flies*: Murrain amongst their Cattle; Boils and Blains upon themselves. Unmov'd by these Punishments, He Shower'd down Hail to destroy Man and Beast, such Shoals of uncommon Locusts, as darkned their Land, and devour'd the Fruits of their Ground: And lastly, when nothing else could open their Eyes, and melt their harden'd Hearts, in one Night He miraculously destroy'd all their First-born. But it was the State of the *Jews* I propos'd chiefly to consider, because to them the

the Text does immediately refer ; as also, because they were chosen by God, to Illustrate his Providence, and to be the Rule, and Standard of his Dealings, with all other People. Hear therefore the Laws given to them. *If ye walk in my Statutes, and keep my Commandments, and do them: then the Land shall yield her Increase; and the Trees their Fruit; and your Threshing shall reach unto the Vintage; and the Vintage shall reach unto the Sowing Time; and ye shall eat your Bread unto the full; and dwell in your Land safely; and I will give Peace in the Land; and ye shall chase your Enemies; Neither shall the Sword go thro' your Land; and I will walk among you; and will be your God; and ye shall be my People, but, if ye will not hearken to me; and will not do all these Commandments; I will send Diseases amongst you; and if ye will not for this hearken unto me; then I will punish you seven times more for your Sins. I will bring a Sword upon you; that shall avenge the Quarrel of my Covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your Cities; I will send Pestilence among you; and ye shall be deliver'd into the hand of the Enemy; and I will break the Staff of your Bread; and it shall be deliver'd to you by Weight; and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.* According to these Promises and Threatnings Observe, that all the Days of *Joshua*, while the People serv'd the Lord, they Conquer'd all that oppos'd them: Five Kings at once lay at *Joshua's* Feet: And in the Days of the Elders that out-liv'd him; they were in a most flourishing Condition: But when there arose another Generation after them, *which knew not the Lord, but did Evil in his sight*: whithersoever they went, *the hand of the Lord was against them*; all the former Plenty of their Country, was turn'd to Want: for the *Midianites*, the *Amalekites*, and the Children of the East, left neither Sustenance for them, nor their Cattle. Many more Instances of this kind might be produced, to shew that the *Jews* had it intirely in their own Power to be Happy: they had plain and reasonable Laws to walk by, fair Warning before hand, lively Promises, and Threatnings, to allure them to their Duty, and to deter them from Sin. They saw by Experience, that *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but that Sin is a Reproach to any People*; that in all Ages, *those that fear'd God, and wrought Righteousness, were accepted by him.* But,

Secondly, *Since the Revelation of the Gospel, by the Son of God, we in these last Ages of the World, have more clear Discoveries made to us, than the Jews had; and consequently, are oblig'd to greater Degrees of Holiness than they were.* 'Tis true, *Moses* had the Transcendent Privilege to see God's Face; but, such Bright, over-powering Rays of Glory darted from his Countenance, that he was forced to put a Veil upon his own. The loud Sound of the Trumpet pierc'd his Ears, and Alarm'd all the Powers of his Soul; the terrible Quaking of the Mountain, shook the Foundations of his Heart: But at the same time, fill'd his Breast with Horror and Amazement: for he confess'd, *that he was terribly afraid.* We all with open Face, as in a Glass, behold the Glory of the Lord; who, in Compassion to our Frailty and Fears, pitied our Nature, by assuming it himself, that so, in the most gentle, easy, and familiar way, he might instruct his Disciples, without terrifying them: His Words were soft, and mild, yet powerful, and engaging; upon which accounts, He was
justly

The Way to make a Nation Happy.

Justly said, to speak as never Man did. He told the Jews, That he came down from Heaven, from the Bosom of his Father, for that he was Gods own Son; that his Design was not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them: that he was the very Sum and Substance, of all their Shadows, the *Messias* so lively describ'd in their Prophecies, set forth in their Types, so long, and so earnestly expected by them: That his Business was to reform the World, and he went about doing Good; He wrought such Miracles, as none before him could pretend to do. He went about all Galilee, healing all manner of Sicknesses and Diseases, He rais'd the Dead, and cast out Devils; He miraculously Fed many Thousands, the boisterous Winds, and enrag'd Seas obey'd his Voice; He was Transfigured before his Disciples, when the Beauty of Heaven, descending on his Countenance, to be there more Beautiful, discover'd the sensible Presence of the Deity in him. Many of these, he did in an Instant, by an absolute Dominion over Nature. He no sooner said, *Be thou clean*, but immediately the Leper was cleansed. These plain Effects of a Divine Power, the Pharisees themselves could not but own, tho' they would not acknowledge the true Cause; and almost all the Spectators said, when Christ comes, the promis'd Deliverer, will he do more Miracles, than these, which this Man hath done. He was born as the *Messiah* was to be born, of a Virgin, of the Family of David, in the Town of Bethlehem; 'Twas foretold, That He should be numbred with Transgressors, and He was Crucify'd betwixt two Thieves, that His Garments should be divided, and Lots cast for his Coat. At his Death the Rocks rent, the Air Thunder'd, the Graves were opened, and all the Powers of Heaven and Earth, were in strong Convulsions, and great Agonies, while the Lord of Nature was expiring on the Cross. And then, to be assured that he was really Dead, One of them which stood by, pierc'd his Side with a Spear, and forthwith there issued out Blood and Water; further yet, all possible Care was taken to secure his Sepulchre, by rolling a great Stone to the Door, and setting a Watch; but alas! there was no confining him, to whom all Power belongs. Destroy this Temple, says He, and, in Three Days, I will raise it up. And he was as good as his Word; for, he rose from the Dead, convers'd with his Disciples Forty Days; shew'd them his Hands, and his Feet, made Thomas thrust his Finger into his Side, and Discours'd with them, about those very things, which He had taught them before his Passion. Then in the Presence of a great Number, He visibly Ascended up into Heaven, as he told his Disciples he should do, and thereupon made good his Promise, to send them another Comforter. For the Holy Ghost came down, and instructed the Apostles, in all Knowledge, and in all Truth. So that if we will but give the same Credit to the History of the Gospel, that we would to any common History, 'tis impossible to disbelieve it; He degrades Himself below the Dignity of being a Man, who refuses to be a Christian. Well therefore, did he upbraid the Cities, wherein most of his mighty Works were done; because they either believed not; or else liv'd, as if they did not believe: *Woe unto thee Corazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes: If I had not done amongst them the Works which no other*

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Man did, they had not had Sin; but now have they no Cloak for their Sin. *This is therefore the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darknes rather than Light.* He told them, that many Prophets, and Kings, had desir'd earnestly to see the things which they saw, and could not see them; and to hear the things which they heard, and could not hear them: That to whom much was given, of them much would be required; and if they should fall away now, 'twould be impossible to renew their State, and save them. These Truths, were of such Force, as to make not only many Converts, but many Martyrs to Christianity: Which, we cannot imagine they could ever have done, if they had not been founded upon the clearest Evidence: A better Covenant, upon better Promises; and therefore might reasonably bind its Professors, to greater Sanctity, even than the *Mosaic Dispensation*: To be Holy, as God is Holy, in all manner of Conversation: to be Pure, as Christ is Pure, to strive to enter in at the straight Gate, to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling; to add to the most lively Faith, the most illustrious Virtue; to the most shining Virtue, the strictest Temperance; and to the strictest Temperance, the most resolv'd Patience; and to all these, the most unfeign'd, and comprehensive Brotherly Love: and one Virtue to another, and one Degree of Virtue to another, that thus we might, as far as in us lay, adorn the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God; and make our own Calling and Election sure. But, as Christianity is crown'd with more Blessings, and attended with greater Helps and Advantages, than either the *Patriarchal*, or *Mosaic Dispensation*, and consequently, obliges its Professors, by all the Ties of Duty and Gratitude, to exceed them in Holiness. So,

Thirdly, *Of all Nations under Heaven, we of this Island, seem to have been God's peculiar Care; and have seen, and felt, the most amazing Instances, of his Love and Goodness.* Riches, and Plenteousness, have seem'd to dwell in our Land; a sort of Microcosm, or little World, abounding with things necessary and convenient for its self; and able, frequently, to supply its Neighbours: The great Creator, by his good Providence, join'd with his Almighty Power, has made the Sea to become a Wall to us, encompassing us with Blessings on every Side: Peace and Plenty within, Safety and Protection without; thus, to our just Wonder and Astonishment, may we see the People of a little Island, after a long and expensive War Abroad, look flourishing, fat, and well liking at Home. While the numerous Inhabitants of a vast Continent, are ruin'd by the insatiable Ambition of their King; And whilst we have been getting Towns and Countrys, can't so much as get Bread. Nor is the Constitution of our Government, less an Instance of the Divine Favour, bearing the nearest Resemblance, to that strict Law of Wisdom, Justice, and Righteousness, by which God himself Governs the World. Design'd for, and every way adapted to the Good of Mankind. So that every English Man, as soon as he is capable of enjoying them, is taught to know, that he has Rights and Privileges secured to him, by the same Tye, that he pays his Obedience and Submission to his Prince. But, as I would give no Offence in any thing, that the Ministry might not be blamed, so it would be out of my Sphere, and unbecoming my Function to say any thing more of these things, than what directly tends to promote

mote the Glory of Christ's Kingdom. And then as to the Christian Religion, which is the greatest Blessing that ever God vouchsafed to the World; it made an early Entrance into this Island; within a few Years after the Crucifixion of our Saviour; and here we may observe a particular Providence, in *bringing Good out of Evil*, by a Series of Causes, so dark and dismal in themselves, as none but God could foresee, would above an Hundred Years after, most Illustriously shine forth in the Event. For the Divisions of the *Britains* amongst themselves, made Room for *Julius Caesar*, about the Year of the World's Creation, Three Thousand Nine Hundred and Thirteen, to Invade this their Country, and make it a Province of the *Roman Empire*. Thus were the Inhabitants, who were before rude and barbarous, Civiliz'd and Polish'd, and by that means prepar'd for the early Reception of the Gospel; which has been still preserv'd here, in greater Purity, than any place that we know of in the World. Our People are not commanded to *search the Scriptures*, and yet kept from understanding them. To believe *Self-evident Contradictions*; to hope for Salvation, without *Repentance* and a *Good Life*; they are not here deluded, to give up their *Interests*, their *Substance*, their *Consciences*, their *Souls*, to the Specious Pretences, and fair Promises, of their Ambitious, ill designing Teachers, who have not fear'd to invade the very *Rights of Heaven*, imitating that Aspiring Apostate Prince, whose Spirit seems now to reign in those Sons of Disobedience; and as he carried our Lord and Master up to a Pinnacle of the Temple, and tempted him *with all the Glory of this World*, the least part of which, he had no Right to give, so do the Popish Priests, tempt and betray his Disciples, by shewing in a false Light, the Glories of the other World, and then prophanelly promising to give them all, if they will but *Worship their Images*, implicitly follow the most unreasonable Commands, which, in reality, is nothing less than *falling down and worshipping them*. But we Preach *Christ Crucify'd*, to the Jews a *Stumbling Block*, to the Greeks *Foolishness*; to the Roman Catholicks *Mammon*; but to us that truly believe, the Wisdom, and the Power of God. Our Preaching is not with *Worldly Wisdom*, but in Demonstration of the Spirit, and with Power; and every Man's Conscience will witness for us, when we discharge our Duty aright, it is with *Simplicity*, and *Godly Sincerity*, and such as will most effectually make Men *wise unto Salvation*. And it must be own'd, as a Substantial Proof, of God's Approbation of the Reform'd Religion, that it has so wonderfully, escap'd many Plots and Conspiracies, out-liv'd many of its cruel Adversaries; and we trust will out-live them all. For, Blessed be his Holy Name, He has plac'd at the Head of it, a Queen, whom He may take Delight to Honour. Who by her *Exemplary Piety* Adorns, as by Her *Wisdom* and *Power* she Defends, the Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints. To her Religious Care, the Justice of the Cause we are Engaged in, and some few Pious *Lots* amongst us, may we reasonably impute the Glorious Successes that attend Her Reign, in the Administration of Civil Affairs; not our Prosperity only, but our common Safety. Had not these stood in the Gap, to plead for our Nation, according to the Discovery God has made of himself, and according to his Dealing with other Nations, what must have become of us? for alas! the greatest Part

of

of us, are so far from living like a People sav'd by the Lord, and distinguish'd by Mercies from all the rest of Mankind, that all things consider'd, they will appear, to have distinguish'd themselves, by the greatest Wickednesses, and the highest Ingratitude. Witness those *Atheistical Notions*, which some have even dar'd to publish, whilst God's Judgments are Abroad in the World, and his Long-suffering, Mercy, and undeserv'd Goodness, have excited his Almighty Power, to guard and secure them.

Why will they rob us of that Comfort we have, since they cannot give us any? Why will they pull down, and ruin all, since they can build up nothing in the Room of it? Can they contemplate this noble Fabrick of the World, which rais'd so many Wise and Great Men to the highest Admiration. *O Lord! how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom thou hast made them all: the whole Earth is full of thy Greatness!* Can they consider their own curious Frame, how fearfully and wonderfully they themselves are made, both as to Soul and Body, and yet slight and despise their Maker. Others have endeavour'd to ridicule the *Sacred Mysteries of the Gospel*, deny'd the Divinity of our Saviour, made God a Liar, and as far as in them lay, *Crucify'd his dear Son, who dy'd for them, afresh, and put him to an open Shame.* Wicked! and prophane! bold! presumptuous! and harden'd Sinners! that would not rather tremble before him, whose Voice did shake the Earth, and break the very Rocks asunder. Who turn their Reason, against him who gave it them, and make that which should have been for their Welfare, an Occasion of their falling forever. And to captivate and debase the Minds of others, and make as many Companions in Misery as they can; recommend their scanty, slavish Notions, under the specious Character of *advancing Reason*, and of *Free Thinking*: as the Devil, whose Service they are drudging in, tempted our First Parents out of Paradise, by telling them, *Ye shall be like Gods.* Miserable Men! as if it could be an Argument of their having more Light to be always groping in the Dark, as if it were an advancing of Reason, to be diving into things beyond Reason; as if it were proper for them, weak and unworthy Creatures, to understand all the hidden Mysteries of God, which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive here, but it will be part of our Happiness hereafter. Now we see thro' a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face; now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as we are known. Others have deny'd the Immortality of the Soul, against Natural and Moral Arguments, against Revelation, against its own Dictates, and too justly dreading that Doom they have deserv'd, to be for ever Miserable, endeavour to appease their raving Consciences, with wretched, false deluding hopes that they shall cease to be. Others make it their Business to *Invalidate Religion*, by scoffing and railing, representing it as a Politick Contrivance of State, and its Ministers, as mov'd only by Worldly Interest, to promote and carry it on. Vain unthinking Men! was it any Advantage to the Apostles, and Primitive Christians, to be persecuted, from Place to Place; destitute, afflicted, tormented: to wander about in Sheepskins, and Goat-skins; to Labour and Travel, in Watchings often; in Fastings often; and at last to be put to a most cruel Death. Yet all these notoriously infamous Principles have been maintained, and because Sentence against such Evil Works

Works is not executed speedily; therefore the Hearts of these wicked Men are fully set in them to do Evil. Prophaneness is grown into a fashionable Custom, and esteem'd a becoming Grace to Conversation, it is used to fill up the Defects of Sense, and set off Cowardice with an Heroic Air. Thus is God defy'd, his Holy Name prophan'd, his Worship Contemn'd, and the poor unthinking Vulgar, believing it an Honour to imitate their Superiors, learn to Swear and Curse by Example. Immorality, like a common Prostitute, not content with private Wickedness; and to lurk in the secret Corners of the Streets, shews her Impudent Face in the most publick Places, and so spreads her contagious Influence, in Defiance of all the Laws of God and Man.

Besides all these, a great Heat and Fervor about things of no Moment at all, and a great Coldness and Indifferency to true Religion, can't but be observ'd in some even of the better part of us. Who seldome take Care to distinguish the Lord's Day, from all the rest, but by being more Idle, more useless and insignificant upon it; by making more needless, not to say Impertinent, Visits; and by hearing more vain Conversation upon that than any other Day. And of those who do attend the Service of the Church, how many seem to make it but a common Form, an Occasion to loyter away a space of Time they know not how to spend. How ready are they to Carp at our Doctrine, and find fault even with their Teachers, and ridicule the very Ministers of God which he has sent to do them Good. How few hear us with that Spirit of Meekness, with that teachable Disposition as if they were resolv'd to Practice what they hear, *the Word of Truth which is able to save their Souls.* And when any People have grown careless and indifferent as to Religious Duties, and have neglected to pay their Tribute of Publick Prayer and Praise to God, have slighted his Ministers, and despised his Word. That People have fall'n from private Worship too, have sunk into all manner of Vice and Wickedness; brought Dishonour and Shame, and at last Ruin, to that Nation or Country to which they did belong. I might appeal to either the *Greek*, or the *Roman*, or even the *Turkish* History for the Truth of this Observation. These are sad Truths, dismal to me to relate, and dismal to every good Christian to hear. But yet they must be told, and heard and consider'd too, if ever we hope to be long a *Happy People*, to enjoy our *usual Plenty*, and to see a glorious and a lasting *P.ace*. For this Reason it is, that we are call'd upon from the Throne, to Fast for our past Sins, to mortifie our Lusts and Passions, bring our Souls to their due Frame, and to pray for Grace to serve God, with all our Heart, our Mind, our Soul, our Strength. That so he may Guard and Protect us at Home, go along with, and Fight for, our Armies Abroad. *That no Sedition may disturb this State, nor Schisms distract this Church; but as we are Members of the same Body, and Professors of the same Faith and Hope, so we may with one Heart and one Mouth glorifie God.* And indeed were we not Commanded to do this, the Time itself would suggest something like it to us. For the Wisdom of our Church has set it apart, as a proper Season, to Fast, and Pray, and Humble ourselves, for those Sins, which occasion'd the Fasting, and Prayer, and Humiliation of our dear Lord. We do now, but Commemorate his Love, and Imitate his Example.

Besides,

Besides, our Brave Generals are making ready to hazard their own Lives, and the Lives of many Thousands in the Field of Battle. And ought not we, *to put on the whole Armor of God*, and Fight with Prayers, Supplications, and Tears, and endeavour to do all the Good we can, both for their Sakes and our own.

The Affairs of all *Europe*, seem to be near a Crisis, and the Happiness of us, and our Posterity, to depend upon what is shortly to be accomplished. Therefore, as we value our *Liberties and Properties*, and what ought to be dearer to us our *Religion*; as we value the Welfare of our *dear Children*, who are part of ourselves; as we value the *Good* of that *Country* where we were born; and where we have lived so Happily for many Years; as we would preserve that *Government*, which cost so much Blood and Treasure, to make it what it is, the best in the whole World. Let us study which are the proper Methods to answer all these *glorious Ends*, and be as sincere in Practising, as we are exact in Considering them.

I am aware, before whom I have the Honour to speak, as also of the pressing Necessity of what I am with Humility to offer. That every one of us would, in our respective *Stations and Places*, vigorously set about the noble and necessary Work of a *Reformation of Manners*. It is high Time, to think of this in good earnest, when Vice appears so boldly and openly, when it has got such a head, that it can hardly bear to be checked and controul'd; and when, as the *Roman Historian* complains of his Times, *ad ea Tempora, quibus nec vitia nostra, nec remedia, pati possumus, perventum est*. However, Men must be told of their Sin and Danger, and great Care must be taken to reform them. For this end it is that we, the Ministers of God, are sent forth; with a Command to take heed unto ourselves, and to our Doctrine, to *reprove, rebuke, and exhort*; to *feed the Flock of Christ*, as we love our dear Master, would discharge our great Trust, and hope to give up our Accounts with Joy. 'Tis true, very strong and powerful Engagements, do attend the Execution of our Office, for we have the Terrors of the Lord. But by these we can only persuade Men. Fit therefore is it, that our Persuasions, should be back'd by the *Authority of the Magistrates*. For if *they bear the Sword in vain*, we must necessarily *Preach in vain too*. And as the *Magistrate* is to punish, so is it every ones Duty to Inform the *Magistrate*, whenever he observes a Transgression of the Law; for otherwise it cannot be, but that Sin must many Times go unpunish'd: And he who complains not to Justice against it, does seem to consent to, and become a Partner in that Crime; and perhaps as many more, as a profligate Sinner, harden'd by Impunity shall commit. Some, I know, as being nearly concern'd that Vice should not be opposed, have made it their Business, to cast an Oidium upon the *Word Informer*, as if it were not *Good Manners*, to endeavour to reform *bad ones*; as if the *Gentleman*, and the *Christian*, were Titles Inconsistent. But he that would please Men, rather than God, has as wrong Notions of *Good Breeding*, as if he should turn his back upon his Prince, in order to Complement his Servant. *He that is ashamed of God, and of his Word, of him shall the Blessed Son of God be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels*. Let no Man therefore suffer himself to be banter'd out of his Religion, no Wise or Good

Good Man will attempt it, and why should we be concern'd for what the Foolish, and the Prophane think or speak of us? When we are doing our Duty to God, we are serving the best, the richest, and the greatest Master in the World; the great King of Heaven and Earth, whose Service is the highest Honour, and the most perfect Freedom, and whose Rewards are Infinite; *at his Right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.*

Now if this were heartily done, it would in some Measure restrain the Wickednesses of the present Age. And then if great Care were taken in the Education of Children, in instructing them in the Principles of the Christian Religion, by Parents or Masters at Home, and by Ministers in the Church, or other Publick Place of Divine Worship, (as is done in many Places within this great City) and it were heartily to be wish'd, that it were done in every Parish in England. I say, if the Boy were rightly Instructed, and carefully train'd up, 'twould be impossible for the Man to be so bad; and consequently we should take Care to leave a better Age behind us. And lastly, as to our present Welfare, *Let us follow after the things that make for Peace.* Not only because that is the truest Testimony of our Love to God, who has told us, *that by mutual Love, all Men shall know that we are his Disciples*; but also with Regard to our own Tranquillity and Safety, For, say he, (and that Saying is founded upon the Nature of Man, and he has felt the Truth of it) *if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not bitten and devour'd one of another.* Let us therefore, as far as in us lies, *live peaceably with all Men*; and practice those Vertues which are most apt to engage the Affections of Men to us, to oblige and reconcile. In a Word, let us uniformly obey all God's Commands; and be animated to do this the more earnestly, by his farther Goodness, the present Exigency of our Affairs, and our great need of his Help and Protection. Then shall we have answer'd the Design of this Day. And let us conclude all with our hearty Prayers to Almighty God, *That he will continue to bless our most Gracious Queen in Her Person, in Her Renown'd General the most Illustrious Prince and Duke of Marlborough, who has already done such great things for us, and upon whose Head and Heart so very much depends; and Prosper Her Counsels at Home, and Her Armies Abroad; make Her Reign exceeding Glorious, and long; that She may be as perfectly easie in Ruling Her Dutiful and Obedient Subjects, as they are Happy in Her. And that Peace and Plenty may make this Nation Flourish so long as the Sun and Moon Endure.* Amen.

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